

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for sharing information between one or more users engaged in analyzing data, comprising:
 - one or more applications for manipulating data;
 - an annotation store for storing annotations created for data manipulated by the one or more applications; and
 - an annotation browser configured to access the annotation store and provide one or more graphical user interfaces for creating and viewing annotations for data manipulated by the one or more applications.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein the annotation browser is separate to the one or more applications.
3. The system of claim 1, wherein the annotation browser is a web-based browser.
4. The system of claim 1, further comprising an annotation server.
5. The system of claim 4, wherein the annotation browser is configured to access the annotation store independently of the annotation server.
6. The system of claim 4, wherein the annotation browser is configured to access the annotation store via the annotation server.
7. The system of claim 6, further comprising a set of one or more application programming interface functions, wherein the annotation browser is configured to communicate with the annotation server via calls to one or more of the application programming interface functions.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein the system further comprises one or more graphical user interfaces, accessible from within one or more of the applications, for creating and viewing annotations.
9. The system of claim 1, wherein the annotation browser is configured to display annotations and links to associated annotated data objects.
10. The system of claim 9, wherein selecting the links to associated data objects causes an application used to manipulate the associated annotated data objects to be invoked.
11. The system of claim 1, wherein the annotation browser is configured to display data and indications of what displayed data has one or more corresponding annotations.
12. The system of claim 11, wherein the annotation browser is configured to display one or more annotation icons proximate to an annotated data object.
13. The system of claim 12, wherein:
 - at least one common annotation describes more than one data object; and
 - the annotation browser is configured to display a common annotation icon proximate to data objects described by the common annotation.
14. The system of claim 13, wherein the annotation browser is configured to display different annotation icons proximate to data objects described by different annotations.
15. The system of claim 10, wherein the annotation browser is configured to display a first annotation icon to indicate a displayed data object has a single annotation and a second annotation icon to indicate a displayed data object has multiple annotations.

16. The system of claim 10, wherein the annotation browser is configured to display a first portion of annotation data from an annotation, in response to a user positioning a cursor over an associated annotation icon.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein the annotation browser is further configured to, in response to the user selecting the annotation icon, display a second portion of annotation data from the annotation.

18. The system of claim 17, wherein the annotation browser is further configured to, in response to the user selecting the annotation icon, retrieve the second portion of annotation data from the annotation store.

19. A system for accessing annotations and annotated data, comprising:
 one or more applications for manipulating data;
 at least one application data store for storing data manipulated by the one or more applications;
 at least one annotation store for storing annotations created for data manipulated by the applications; and
 an executable component configured to access both the one or more application data stores and the one or more annotation stores.

20. The system of claim 19, wherein the executable component is a web-based browser.

21. The system of claim 19, wherein the executable component provides one or more graphical user interface screens allowing a user to query the annotation store for annotations satisfying one or more specified annotation query criteria.

22. The system of claim 21, wherein the executable component provides one or more graphical user interface screens allowing a user to query the application data store for annotations satisfying one or more specified application data query criteria.

23. The system of claim 22, wherein the executable component further provides:
one or more graphical user interface screens for displaying results data satisfying the one or more specified application data query criteria; and
one or more graphical user interface screens for creating annotations for results data satisfying the one or more specified application data query criteria.

24. The system of claim 22, wherein the executable component is configured to:
query the application data store for data satisfying the one or more specified application data query criteria; and
query the annotation data store for annotations satisfying the one or more specified annotation query criteria that are associated with the data satisfying the one or more specified application data query criteria.

25. A system for managing annotations for one or more different type data sources manipulated by one or more applications, comprising:
an annotation database for storing annotations separately from the data sources associated with the annotations;
a set of annotatable data object points defining portions of the data sources associated with the annotations described by the associated annotations;
a set of annotation structures, each defining a set of annotation fields;
a set of plug-in components, each for interfacing between one or more applications and an annotation server; and
an annotation server configured to receive, via the plug-in components, requests to access annotations for one or more of the annotatable data object points issued by the one or more of the applications running on the client computer and generate a graphical user interface screen, based on an annotation structure associated with the

one or more of the annotatable data object points, for creating or viewing annotations for the one or more annotatable data object points; and
a browser application configured to browse annotations in the annotation store.

26. The system of claim 25, wherein the browser application is configured to provide links to annotated data objects.

27. A method for deploying an annotation management system on a network comprising:

installing the annotation management system on the network;
identifying annotatable data objects manipulated by at least one application on the network capable of being annotated by the annotation management system; and
providing an annotation browser separate from the at least one application for browsing annotations created for the annotatable data objects.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the annotation browser is configured to query both annotations and annotated data.

29. The method of claim 27, wherein the annotation browser allows for the simultaneous searching of annotations and annotated data objects.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the annotation browser is configured to receive, from a requesting entity, a request to simultaneous search both annotations and annotated data, based on at least one annotation search condition and at least one data search condition provided in the request.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the annotation browser is further configured to return, to the requesting entity a list of data objects satisfying the at least one data search condition and having annotations satisfying the at least one annotation search condition.

32. The method of claim 30, wherein the annotation browser is further configured to return, to the requesting entity, a list of annotations satisfying the at least one annotation search condition and describing data satisfying the at least one data search condition.

33. A computer-readable medium containing an executable browser component for browsing annotations created for data objects manipulated by one or more applications on a network which, when executed by a processor, performs operations comprising:

- providing one or more graphical user interface screens for specifying one or more annotation search conditions;

- providing one or more graphical user interface screens for specifying one or more data search conditions; and

- simultaneously searching both annotations and annotated data, based on at the least one annotation search condition and at the least one data search condition.

34. The computer-readable medium of claim 33, wherein the operations further comprise displaying a list of data objects satisfying the at least one data search condition and having annotations satisfying the at least one annotation search condition.

35. The computer-readable medium of claim 33, wherein the operations further comprise displaying a list of annotations satisfying the at least one annotation search condition and describing data satisfying the at least one data search condition.